



The Eye of Horus - Beginners' Corner 8 - with David Ogden. It's difficult enough to learn the secrets of a new country's stamp designs, but when the language and even the figures are completely unfamiliar the task is even more troubling. Here are some clues about finding your way in Egypt

Numbers and Dates, a quick reference for English-speaking collectors

Egyptian numbers at a glance: Egyptian (and most Middle Eastern countries') stamps use a decimal (nought to nine) system and Eastern Arabic ("Arabic-Indic") numerals. These represent the same numbers as Western numerals. But remember that numbers are always read left-to-right, even though Arabic text reads right-to-left (see their opposite directions below).

Numerals chart

Western: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Egyptian: ٠ ١ ٢ ٣ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧ ٨ ٩

Numbers 1 to 10 in Egyptian Stamps

				
واحد wāhid 1	إننين itnèn 2	ثلاثة taláta 3	أربعة 'arbā'a 4	خمسة khamsa 5
				
ستة sitta 6	سبعة sab'a 7	ثمانية tamānya 8	تسعة tis'a 9	عشرة 'ashara 10

These delightful fantasy stamps are taken from Wiki Commons

Some numbers look similar (the equivalent of 1 and 9, for instance), but common pitfalls are ٥ = 5 (often mistaken for zero) and ٤ = 4 (often confused with ٢).

Reading Denominations on Stamps: Egyptian currency commonly found on stamps includes:

- Millièmes (m or mills; 10 millièmes equals one piastre)
- Piastres (*qirsh*, P or PT; 100 piastres equals one pound)
- Egyptian Pounds (*guinea*, £E, LE or Livre)

Illustrated examples



Example: Sphinx definitive

5 = ٥ مليمات milliemes

Found on early Sphinx and King Fuad definitives right up almost to modern times, uses the plural ending -at (milliem-at). Singular has no special ending so you may see millieme wahid مليم واحد (one millième) or just millième مليم



Example: King Farouk issue

10 = ١٠ مليمات 10 mills (millièmes)

Although intended for the use of British troops in Egypt, the value is expressed in millièmes

Dates on Egyptian stamps: Which calendar?

Egyptian stamps may use:

- **Hijri (Islamic)** calendar, based on Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina, and so its dates start from 622;
- **Gregorian calendar**, introduced under British influence to standardize timekeeping with the international calendar, most widely used today;
- **Both together.**

Hijri (Islamic) dates — most common pre-1950. These dates use the lunar calendar (12 months of 30 days in a year), are written in Arabic-Indic numerals, and almost always start 13xx on Egyptian stamps. Rule of thumb 13xx = Hijri, not AD

Gregorian dates (later issues) — more common from the 1940s, especially on international commemoratives and post-monarchy (Republican) issues.

Illustrated examples

Example: 1931 Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition



Example: Declaration of 1952 Revolution

١٩٥٢ = 1952 AD

1930-31 AD equates to ١٣٤٩ Hijri

Hijri years overlap two Gregorian years. Precise conversion is not usually necessary.

To summarise, do learn the ten numerals (0–9), recognise 13xx = Hijri and use catalogues for Gregorian equivalents. Don't panic about exact Hijri conversion, don't assume that dates on cancellations equal issue dates, and don't expect all stamps to show dates numerically.

Collector's Cheat Sheet! - if it starts with 13 or 14, it's Hijri. If it starts with 18 to 20, it's Gregorian. Numbers read left-to-right. Catalogues do the rest.

WANTED!

The transition to digital means the QC and the website have more space to display members' collections - more room for text, illustrations, covers, cards, discoveries, queries. Anything that is attractive, meaningful and connected to Egypt stamps and postal history. Don't be shy, we look forward to accommodating what interests you ... don't worry about formatting: we can design the pages to best suit your material (but if you want it to look your way, please contact the Editor for some basic pointers!) The message is: please send us articles to entertain and educate in the QC. If it interests you, it will interest your colleagues. No article too long, no article too short...